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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

A P R I L, 1854.

THE EASTERN QUESTION:

OR, THE THREATENED WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND TURKEY.

We do not propose now to consider the various aspects and bearings of this question; but it may be well to gather from it a few lessons of wisdom and warning.

One of these is the obvious *tendency of the war-system to provoke, rather than prevent war*. This point the present crisis brings out in bold relief. Had there been no such system, there is little reason to suppose, that Europe would now have been on the eve of a war whose duration no human forecast can predict, and whose evils no arithmetic can ever compute. Without the vast and terrible machinery provided to their hand by this system, how could Russia have pounced so suddenly on the northern provinces of Turkey, or the Western powers have dispatched at once their troops for battle on the Danube, or their fleets for conflict in the Black Sea or the Baltic? It is just because the Czar had nearly a million of warriors at command, and the rest of Europe some two millions more, all in constant readiness for slaughter and devastation, that the flames of war now threaten to rage from one end to the other of European Christendom. It is a natural offshoot, a legitimate and palpable result of their war-system; and every one, not blind or mad with prejudice in its favor, must see and admit the fact. We know well enough the stale plea of necessity for all this—a question we are not now discussing; but such a plea, even if strictly true, could not disprove our position, that Europe is indebted to her military system for her present prospects of a general war.

This crisis, moreover, shows the Balance of Power, that figment and ignis fatuus of European diplomacy, to be equally insufficient for the preservation of peace. We have long marvelled to see the shrewdest and best informed statesmen chasing this phantom, and in their chase plunging headlong into the very evils they professedly sought to avert. Such is the spectacle now be-

fore us. The balance of power a conservator of peace ! Why, England and France are avowedly mustering their hosts mainly, if not solely for the preservation of what they deem a proper and indispensable equilibrium of power in the great family of European States. It is ostentatiously proclaimed as the cause, the justification, the dire yet inevitable necessity of the coming conflict. The object is certainly good ; and equally certain it is, that the war-policy of Christendom, the spawn of her primitive pagan barbarism, knows no other means of insuring this object, than an ultimate appeal to arms. Both these points we freely concede ; but can any person of ordinary intelligence fail to see, that this long and fondly cherished idea of a balance of power in Europe has pushed her to the brink of the war now threatened ? Indeed, it is this that has occasioned nearly all the great wars of the Old World for the last two or three centuries ; and it seems to us passing strange, that any man in his senses should cling to this notorious, immemorial fomenter of war as a guardian of peace ; a folly second only to that of the simpleton in a storm at sea clasping an anchor to keep himself from drowning !

Nor can we fail to see, in the case before us, the utter folly and absurdity of war as an Arbiter of Right. Look at the process proposed ; and what element of justice does it contain, or what security does it give for a righteous result ? Justice requires some law as a rule of right, a judge to interpret and apply that law, and trustworthy agents to carry the sentence into execution. Can we discover in the coming struggle any one of these requisites in a process of justice ? What is the law ? The will of the Czar deciding one way, and that of the Sultan with his allies, insisting on the very opposite. Who are the judges ? These same despots, blind with prejudice, and mad with passion, taking each his own view of the case, and persisting, right or wrong, in its enforcement by fire and blood, each party acting as accuser, witness and judge in his own case. And who are to be the executors of these contradictory sentences ? Motley hordes of half-barbarians from the wilds of Russia, and the wide-spread provinces of Turkey, half a million or more of professional cut-throats drilled for the work of human butchery as their trade, vast menageries of human hyenas let loose on the banks of the Danube, and the shores of the Bosphorus, there to settle the pending question of right, to carry out this process of war justice ! How strange that statesmen and philosophers, moralists and even Christians, in this noon of the nineteenth century, should gravely talk of international justice by a process so brutal and fiendish ! What a commentary on the Christianity of governments calling themselves Christian ! What a burning shame on the civilization of the age !

It is truly lamentable to see what a war-spirit the present emergency has developed. Respecting the continent of Europe, we cannot speak so definitely on this point, because the press there is too much muzzled to let us know how the people feel ; but in England where popular sentiments find so free and full an utterance, there seems to be a very general disposition to sus-

tain, if not to urge on the threatened conflict. In reporting an abstract of the news by a late steamer from Europe, one of our contemporaries, probably with as much truth as *sang froid*, says, "among the people of England there is *an excellent spirit in favor of the war!*" We question the excellence of such a spirit in any case; but we see no reason to doubt that it is just now developing itself there in unwonted and somewhat ominous energy. English journals, both secular and religious, appear to be nearly unanimous in justifying, if not demanding a resort to the dread arbitrament of the sword. Indeed, we lately read, in a religious paper of England, a long and elaborate editorial, not merely insisting on the *duty of war* in this case, but volunteering a sort of military lecture about the best mode of its management, an outline of its tactics, a programme of its operations. We must in candor presume, that this clerical exhortation to the atrocities of war, is not a fair specimen of Christians as a body in England; but we fear that the mass even of the religious community there, countenance and encourage an appeal to arms. If so, what could we expect from the people at large, but a fierce and wild war-spirit? So we find it; for we are complacently told, that the army is recruited with great ease, and that the navy, for a wonder worthy of grateful notice, is likely to be manned without the odious necessity of impressment. It would seem, indeed, that the people of England have almost clamored for the war, and that her rulers, after restraining them as long as they safely could, now find themselves compelled by the popular voice to set about it in downright earnest, and to make the most formidable preparations for the struggle.

What an argument is here for the necessity of much larger and more strenuous efforts in the cause of Peace! Some had fondly, though strangely imagined that the war-spirit, from the long continuance of peace, and the spread of pacific sentiments during the last third of a century, was really dying out, or coming under the control or restraint of juster views. Alas! "Leviathan is not so tamed." The serpent, basking in the sun, went to sleep awhile, but did not dream of dying. No; the war-spirit has not been dead, but only in comparative repose, and ready to rush forth at the first blast of the bugle summoning to a popular war. Nearly a whole generation have grown up personally ignorant of the evils inseparable from the strife of arms; and this ignorance will doubtless render it comparatively easy to man fleets, and raise armies for the conflict. Should it continue for any length of time, we foresee, with moral certainty, a turn in the tide that will make vast multitudes besides its immediate victims, rue the day when rulers "cried havoc, and let slip the dogs of war." Still this cannot alter the fact, now so patent to every observer, that the war-spirit is thoroughly roused not only in England, but all over the Continent, and not likely to be restrained from a war that may yet convulse the whole civilized world, and put back its general improvement more than half a century.

But all this, say the apologists for war, could not be avoided without the certainty of still greater evils. Possibly not under the war-policy so long

prevalent throughout Christendom; but it might have been by a timely, honest and earnest adoption of such a policy as the friends of peace recommend. Still are we taunted with the inefficacy of our principles, because forsooth they do not avert the war now threatened. But how could they? They have had no chance by a fair trial. They have not been put in practice; and can medicine cure without an application? If not applied, how can it be held at all responsible for the result? If the people abet, and rulers adopt a war-policy, with what propriety can they turn round upon peace men, and say, ‘there you see the inefficacy of your peace-policy—a feather before a hurricane of fire; a cobweb stretched across a comet’s path!’ The inefficacy of *our* policy? No, ye champions of the war-system, this is your work, not ours; the legitimate result of your own policy, not of ours in any sense or degree. Just embrace our principles, and carry them in good faith into practice by a set of appropriate measures, then may you, if you can, prove their actual inefficacy; but it is palpably absurd to assert or assume this without such a trial. Not one of our peculiar principles or measures have any of the parties in the pending dispute pretended to adopt; and hence its progress can decide nothing, one way or the other, respecting their efficacy, a whit more than the death of a patient who never took a specified medicine, could prove that the medicine, if taken in season, would not have cured him. If the nations of Europe had actually discarded the sword as the arbiter of their disputes; if they had provided in its place such expedients as we propose for a rational, equitable, peaceful adjustment of their difficulties; if they had not only pledged, but practically trained themselves to the use of these substitutes, instead of war; if they had in season made all due arrangements for such a process by stipulated arbitration, and accustomed the public mind to rely on this for the determination of their controversies, and the redress of their alleged grievances; then, but not till then, would they have made a fair experiment, and might, if the result had been a failure, have said with some show of reason, that our principles are visionary, and our measures powerless.

But we cannot now dwell on the prevalent misconceptions of our views, as seen in the case before us; much less can we advert to the important bearings of this crisis on the Cause of Peace, considered as a great Christian effort to do away the hoary and gigantic evil of war as a recognized system of international justice. We invite attention to these points, but must reserve our comments on them to a future occasion.

GIBBON’S VIEW OF WAR.—War, even in its mildest form, is a perpetual violation of every principle of religion and humanity.

COMMERCE A CHECK TO WAR.—The more any nation traffics, upon free and honest principles, the less it will be in danger of War.—*Cobden.*

England was herself the nurse that by her opposition, rocked the French Revolution (of 1792) into vigorous maturity.—*Cobden.*